

City of Rockville

TNP Chapter 8: Implementation

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Planning Commission Recommended Draft - June 2008

(Amended by Staff – February 2009)

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Chapter 8: Implementation

Analysis of Issues

The Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan seeks to lay out the current conditions within the neighborhood, provide guidance for its continued stability and enhancement, and establish conditions to foster a cohesive community that is able to embrace change, while retaining the unique qualities that have served its residents for the past half century. To meet these goals, the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group has made a series of recommendations that aim to respond to change while respecting the rights of individual property owners in the residential, the commercial and the industrial areas.

But a plan is just that, a plan, until its recommendations are acted upon. A workable series of implementation strategies are an essential component of any well-thought-out plan, and five key areas have been identified during the planning process that can act as catalysts for implementation of the Plan recommendations. Each catalyst is described below, together with supporting initiatives that are intended to promote implementation of the major goal. The five catalysts are:

- ***The Residential Areas:*** Maintain and enhance the residential character of the Twinbrook neighborhoods to ensure continued viability and sustainability.
- ***The Public Realm:*** Maintain, upgrade and acquire publicly owned land to ensure that recreational opportunities, public accessibility and the natural environment enhance the quality of life for all residents.
- ***The Commercial Areas:*** Promote the renewal of the Twinbrook neighborhood commercial areas.
- ***The Industrial Areas:*** Promote the renewal of the Twinbrook neighborhood industrial areas.
- ***Transportation and Accessibility:*** Promote safe and easy multi-modal access to mass transit, retail and community facilities.

These catalysts group together Plan recommendations from the various chapters and should help residents, and the City, to identify projects and programs that can help meet the objectives laid out in each catalyst.

Twinbrook is a maturing neighborhood that was built at a time when the City embraced single-use zoning categories and relied on a set of standards that were applied City-wide. The R-60 zoning category that regulates the Twinbrook neighborhoods allows the same height and setbacks in communities throughout the City; market forces at the time of

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development influenced the size and style of the housing that was built. The City has recently recommended revisions to the R-60 zone that would reduce a home's allowable height and lot coverage, and this Plan recommends that these new provisions be carefully monitored in communities such as the Twinbrook neighborhoods to ensure that they do not impose undue burdens on homeowners who wish to expand and improve their homes. ~~if, due to nature of the homes' construction, it is not technically feasible to expand by raising the roof and adding additional stories.~~

The commercial and industrial areas of the neighborhood are also maturing, although at the present time they remain relatively well maintained, have few vacancies and generally provide an acceptable return on investment to their owners. But the adjacent new developments, such as Twinbrook Station and the Rockville Town Square, are bringing change, and single use neighborhood commercial and industrial areas may not function quite so well within the next ten to fifteen years. Places such as the Veirs Mill commercial area and the Lewis Avenue and Ardennes/Halpine industrial areas also offer the potential

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for accommodating a portion of the residential growth that is anticipated within the City and the region over the next twenty-five years.

Tools Available

The City does not currently have a comprehensive redevelopment policy that identifies areas that might be suitable for revitalization, or outline the incentives available to encourage their redevelopment. The City should not use its power of Eminent Domain to assist in the redevelopment of the commercial and industrial areas in Twinbrook. Therefore, a set of regulatory tools that can act as incentives to private redevelopment will need to be devised and implemented.

~~One incentive that could be employed is a floating zone. Floating zones would allow for site assembly, and for owners to determine when market conditions are ripe for redevelopment, while continuing to have the use of their property. The community benefits from the existing properties remaining leased and maintained, rather than vacant and subject to blight, vagrancy and squatters.~~

~~If it is decided to implement floating zones in the existing Twinbrook commercial and industrial areas, it should be with the proviso that they will be reviewed after a period of ten years to determine if they are working as intended, and if not, what amendments should be made.~~

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~~A relatively new type of zoning has recently evolved that emphasizes the appearance of a building or buildings rather than defining them by their use. These new codes are called Form-Based Codes and the City is currently considering them as part of the Rockville's Pike planning process.~~

~~The Form-Based Codes Institute has defined form-based codes as a method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. Form-Based Codes create a predictable public realm by controlling physical form primarily, and land uses secondarily, through city or county regulations. In other words, design is more important than use.~~

Catalyst Number 1

The Residential Areas: Maintain and enhance the residential character of the Twinbrook neighborhoods to ensure continued viability and sustainability.

Summary of Project:

- Maintain the R-60 single family residential zoning in the Twinbrook neighborhoods but monitor implementation of the newly proposed R-60 zone development standards and consider allowing reasonable exceptions to the impervious surface limits if, due to the nature of construction, adding additional stories to a home is not technically feasible.
- Preclude site assembly in the R-60 single-family residentially zoned areas of the Twinbrook neighborhoods.
- Encourage the creation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts, should individual neighborhoods choose.
- To assist homeowners as they renovate their homes, develop a Pattern Book that illustrates the existing housing types and streetscapes and makes recommendations for compatible additions, accessory uses and infill homes.

Who:

- A group of citizens/residents from the Twinbrook neighborhoods.
- City staff.
- Qualified housing design consultant to assist with the development of a Pattern Book.

Support Initiatives:

- Initiate a review of the City of Rockville's Housing Maintenance Codes and practices to ensure that they meet the needs of maturing neighborhoods.

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- Establish a permanent protection mechanism, such as conservation easements for City-owned open space, to give permanent protection to the Civic Center Park and other public parks and to ensure the continuation of an adequate amount of neighborhood open space. Permanently protect the publicly accessible buildings attached to the public parks.
- Encourage individual homeowners to apply to the City if they wish to have their homes considered for designation as historic sites.
- Expand the City's Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program to serve a larger number of homeowners.
- Increase promotion of the City of Rockville Low-Income Homeowner Tax Credit.

Catalyst Number 2

The Public Realm: Maintain, upgrade and acquire publicly owned land to ensure that recreational opportunities, public accessibility and the natural environment enhance the quality of life for all residents.

- Increase open space and recreational opportunities, closer to new population centers.
- Provide greater access to recreational, social and commercial facilities.

Summary of Project:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Parks and Public Spaces Plan for the Twinbrook neighborhoods to improve and increase the public realm.
 - A systematic review of how the public buildings and facilities in the Twinbrook neighborhoods are used.
 - Complete an inventory identifying and quantifying existing greenspace and potential greenspace opportunities for pocket parks, tot lots and additional buffering.
- Identify funding sources (Project Open Space, Parkland Acquisition Fund, etc.)
- Review impact of Recreation and Parks Cost-Recovery Policy on neighborhood amenities and services.

Who and What:

- Twinbrook citizens.
- City staff: Planning, Recreation and Parks, Public Works.

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Support Initiatives:

- Develop and implement a permanent protection mechanism for City-owned parkland to give permanent protection to the Civic Center Park and other public parks, and to ensure the continuation of an adequate amount of neighborhood open space. Permanently protect the publicly

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- accessible buildings attached to the public parks.
- Provide funding for the Parkland Acquisition Fund.
- Create a system of conservation easements for properties identified as suitable.
- Support retention and expansion of the urban tree canopy.

Catalyst Number 3

The Commercial Areas: Promote the renewal of the Twinbrook neighborhood commercial areas.

Replacement of maturing single-use commercial areas with mixed-use neighborhood centers that would provide additional residential options together with a wide range of goods and services to serve the neighborhood.

Summary of Project:

- Rezone the existing C-2 Veirs Mill Road commercial areas to the Mixed Use Neighborhood Commercial (MXNC) zone, with a maximum height of sixty-five feet.
- Connect Atlantic Avenue through the Shopping Center to McAuliffe Drive to create two developable blocks and improve traffic circulation. Traffic calming and pedestrian safety and accessibility should be emphasized.
- Recommended land use: mixed-use neighborhood commercial, with a mix of residential and commercial uses, including retail and office.
- Ground floor retail should include a full-service grocery store and a variety of shops and restaurants to serve the neighborhood.
- Establish Form-Based design standards unique to the Veirs Mill Road commercial area.
- Businesses in the area should be encouraged to form a Twinbrook Business Association.
- Conditions to be met in order to redevelop:
 - Site assembly:

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- The Twinbrook Mart condominium should only be redeveloped as a combined property – not as individual units.
 - Connection of Atlantic Avenue
 - Provision of publicly-accessible space
 - Project proposal meets all the conditions of zone
- If the Maryland State Highway Administration decides to proceed with an enhanced transit system, consider area as a transit hub.
- Include study of the feasibility of pedestrian/bicycle connections under Veirs Mill Road to link both sides of the neighborhood, together with extensive streetscape improvements

*Page 83 (TNPAG Plan reference)***Who:**

- A working group should be formed to develop Form-Based design standards. For the Veirs Mill Road commercial area this group should include but not be limited to the following: residents from both Twinbrook Planning Areas, property owners and/or their representatives, business owners, REDI and/or Rockville Chamber of Commerce, City staff working with a qualified design consultant. (Include and/or consult with Montgomery County and the State Highway Administration(SHA).)
- REDI should include Twinbrook service and retail centers as part of their mission to strengthen and broaden the economic base of Rockville and work to foster a Twinbrook Business Association.

Support Initiatives:

- City should coordinate with SHA to initiate a streetscape project to improve the physical appearance of Veirs Mill Road commercial area by improving pedestrian environment, installing additional trees and enhancing landscaping elements.
- Increase City presence in the Veirs Mill Road commercial area, particularly with the installation of a City Police Sub-station and a Drop-In Center for area teenagers and senior citizens.
- Recommend that the City formulate a comprehensive Redevelopment Policy with appropriate incentives for the redevelopment of specified areas.
- Review of City's Commercial Code Enforcement policies and practices.
- Implement a City-sponsored facade improvement loan program for neighborhood businesses.
- Implement simultaneous to High Performance Building Ordinance adoption.

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- Encourage REDI to work with the Rockville Chamber of Commerce to broaden their membership base and to strengthen their services to retailers in Twinbrook.

Catalyst Number 4

The Industrial Areas: Promote the renewal of the Twinbrook neighborhood industrial areas.

- Improve transitional area between Metro/Twinbrook Station and the Twinbrook neighborhoods. Retain uses that serve community while expanding allowable uses to enable owners to maximize on their location.
- The area should remain within Planning Area 8.
- No automobile uses should be allowed.
- Businesses in the area should be encouraged to form a Twinbrook Business Association.

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Summary of Project:**For the properties on Lewis Avenue:**

- Rezone existing I-2 industrial area to the Industrial Light (I-L) zone. Amend I-L zone to allow Dwellings, multiple-unit, as a Conditional Use. Conditional use allowed only where recommended in the Plan.
 - Mix of uses may be vertical or horizontal, depending upon site design.
 - Residential units should be located on upper floors and facing on to Lewis Avenue.
 - Live-work units should be encouraged.
 - Commercial retail uses should be very limited.

For the properties at Twinbrook Parkway/Ardennes Avenue:

- Rezone the Uniwest/Meljay site at the intersection of Twinbrook Parkway and Ardennes Avenue to the Mixed Use Employment (MXE) zone.
 - Rezone 12750 and 12720 Twinbrook Parkway from the I-1 zone to the Mixed Use Business (MXB) zone.
 - 12720 Twinbrook Parkway is recommended for all multi-family residential use that will create a horizontal mix of uses in the Twinbrook Parkway/Ardennes Avenue/Halpine Road area.
 - Recommend the City-owned buffer located between 12720 Twinbrook Parkway and Halpine Road be improved by the owner of 12720 Twinbrook Parkway in accordance with City of Rockville specifications. The owner should work with the City to maintain the buffer in future years.
 - Should the properties at 12710 and 12730 Twinbrook Parkway annex into the City they should be rezoned Mixed Use Business (MXB)
- Businesses in the area should be encouraged to form a Twinbrook Business Association.

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- Site assembly:
 - The Lewis Avenue Condominium should only redevelop as a combined property – not as individual covenant units.

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- Twinbrook residents
- Property owners and/or their representatives
- REDI
- City staff

Support Initiatives:

- Review of City's Commercial Code Enforcement policies and practices.
- Recommend that the City formulate a comprehensive Redevelopment Policy with appropriate incentives for the redevelopment of specified areas.
- Implement a City-sponsored facade improvement loan program for neighborhood businesses.
- Implement simultaneous to High Performance Building Ordinance adoption.
- Improve open and green space elements in the area. (e.g. 5946 Halpine Road and improved maintenance for the treed buffer area at Halpine Road.)
- Request REDI to include Twinbrook businesses as part of their mission to strengthen and broaden the economic base of Rockville.
- Encourage REDI to work with the Rockville Chamber of Commerce to broaden their membership base and to strengthen their services to Twinbrook businesses.

*Page 85 (TNPAG Plan reference)***Catalyst Number 5**

Transportation and Accessibility: Promote safe and easy multi-modal access to mass transit, retail and community facilities.

- Enhance neighborhood quality by improving both the appearance and the functioning of the streetscape to link the community together.

Summary of Project:

- Implement a soft-wheel circulator trolley that runs clockwise and counter-clockwise from Rockville Town Center-Rockville Metro-Veirs Mill Road-Twinbrook Parkway-Twinbrook Station-Twinbrook Metro-Rockville Pike-Rockville Town Center to increase connections between the Twinbrook neighborhoods, the Rockville Town Center, Twinbrook Stations and Rockville Pike.
- Facilitate pedestrian and bicycle access across Twinbrook Parkway, Veirs Mill Road and the CSX and Metro railroad tracks.

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- Develop a comprehensive plan for intra-neighborhood pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Complete the City's sidewalk project to improve neighborhood connectivity.

Who:

- Twinbrook citizens.
- City staff
- Montgomery County
- State of Maryland

Support Initiatives:

- City and State should initiate a streetscape project to improve the physical appearance of the Veirs Mill Road commercial area by installing additional trees and landscaping elements, while assuring safe access from the neighborhoods to the commercial areas.
- Study feasibility of pedestrian/bicycle connections under Veirs Mill Road, at or near Atlantic Avenue, to link both sides of the neighborhood and to improve connections to Rock Creek Park.
- To reduce the impact of cut-through traffic; study the feasibility of one-way circulation systems throughout the Twinbrook neighborhoods, especially in areas with "short blocks."

City-wide Issues that Affect the Implementation of this Plan

- Develop an Open Space Zone.
- Develop a City redevelopment policy.
- Develop City policy on industrial land.
- Develop City policy on retail properties.
- Review the City's Housing Policy to de

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- termine whether the current MPDU program is meeting current and future housing needs.
- Review policy on citywide retail sector, with focus on retail centers that abut residential neighborhoods.
- Develop City policy regarding residential uses abutting major highways.
- Establish design standards within Rockville Pike and Twinbrook Metro Performance

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- Zone Plans to mitigate reflective noise from buildings abutting railroad tracks.
- Review impact of Recreation and Parks Cost-Recovery Policy on neighborhood amenities and services.
- Fund Park Land Acquisition Fund within City's Capital Improvements Program.
- Encourage review of impact of Community Policing Policy.
- Ensure adequate Inspection Services staffing levels.
- Strengthen City's residential property maintenance codes.
- Request REDI to include citywide or neighborhood service and retail centers as part of their mission to strengthen and broaden the economic base of Rockville.
- Encourage REDI to work with the Rockville Chamber of Commerce to broaden their membership base and to strengthen their services to retailers in all parts of the City.
- Develop a City-sponsored facade improvement loan program for neighborhood businesses.